

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Registration FormNATIONAL  
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

## 1. Name of Property

historic name

other names/site number Lower Central Business District

## 2. Location

street &amp; number roughly bounded by Canal, Tchoupitoulas, Poydras, N/A not for publication

city, town New Orleans O'Keefe, Common &amp; S. Saratoga N/A vicinity

state Louisiana code LA county Orleans code 071 zip code 70113 &amp; 70130

## 3. Classification

## Ownership of Property

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

## Category of Property

- ☐ building(s)  
☒ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

## Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
247	32 buildings
	sites
	structures
	objects
247	32 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously  
listed in the National Register 14

## 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  
☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the  
National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.  
In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

May 15, 1991

Date

Signature of certifying official Leslie Tassin, LA SHPO, Dept of Culture,  
Recreation and Tourism

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

## 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- ☒ entered in the National Register.  
☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined eligible for the National  
Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ determined not eligible for the  
National Register.

☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:)Entered in the  
National Register

6/24/91

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business, specialty  
store, department store, financial  
institution, professional, restaurant

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business, professional,  
financial institution, specialty store,  
department store, restaurant

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Italianate

Classical Revival

Moderne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick, concrete

walls brick

roof tar, metal, slate

other cast-iron

granite

### Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The boundaries of the Lower Central Business District encompass a total of 293 buildings. The district contains one certified historic district, Picayune Place, as well as a portion of the city-designated Canal Street Historic District, which has not been certified. Contributing elements within the district range in age from 1830 to 1941, and consist primarily of buildings which were erected to house commercial and office uses. The district has a non-contributing rate of only 11%, and most of the non-contributing buildings are in scale with their historic neighbors. As the name indicates, the district is only a portion of the New Orleans CBD. The rest of the CBD is visually separated by the almost completely redeveloped four lane Poydras Avenue and was listed on the Register last year as the Upper CBD.

The Lower Central Business District occupies a portion of the tract of land which was owned by Don Bertrand Gravier and Madame Marie Gravier in the late eighteenth century. The Gravier property was subdivided into streets and blocks by the Spanish Royal Surveyor Carlos Trudeau in 1788. The land between Common and Iberville Streets was to remain city property, known as the City Commons, until 1810 when the city surveyor Jacques Tanesse prepared a plan which defined the location of Common, Canal and Iberville Streets. The extraordinary width of Canal Street was due to the fact that an extension of the Carondelet Canal was to be built down the center of the street, a venture which was never undertaken.

Development of the Lower Central Business District began in the late eighteenth century, but there are no surviving buildings from that period in the district today. With the entry of Louisiana into the United States in 1812, the flow of Anglo-American immigrants from the rest of the country increased rapidly, with most of these new arrivals moving into the section of the city upriver from the French Quarter. By 1820, according to no less a figure than the architect Benjamin Latrobe, the current Central Business District was the scene of a significant amount of new construction activity, including both residential and commercial buildings. The Lower Central Business District, with its proximity to Canal Street, became the focus of the business and commercial interests of New Orleans, and the overwhelming majority of the buildings built in this section, both before and after the Civil War, were intended for one of those uses. Improvements in building technology after the Civil War led to the construction of larger and taller commercial buildings, many of which replaced smaller antebellum commercial buildings. The first half of the twentieth century saw continued commercial building activity, with the use of steel frame structural systems leading to the erection of the city's first 20+ story office buildings, erected for some of the larger banks in the city.

☒ See continuation sheet

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Lower Central Business District, New Orleans, Orleans Parish, LA

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As was the case with the Upper Central Business District, the character of the Lower Central Business District is formed by the concentration of common wall structures, all of masonry or steel frame construction. Contributing buildings in the district range in scale from two stories up to bank buildings in excess of twenty stories in height.

1830-1860 - 47%

This period of the district's development is most prominent in the area bounded by Tchoupitoulas, Common, Camp and Poydras Streets, where the majority of the antebellum buildings in the district stand. These buildings are of masonry construction, generally three or four stories in height, sharing common walls with their neighbors. The Greek Revival and Italianate styles are naturally dominant with respect to these early structures. (See Photos 8-11.) The most important of these Greek Revival style commercial buildings is the structure located at 301 Magazine Street, Photo No. 13, which was designed by the noted architect James Dakin in 1843 to serve as the offices of the New Orleans Canal and Banking Company. The entire facade of this building is clad in Quincy granite, as are the two identical but separate stores which were built for the company on Gravier Street. Immediately adjacent to the Dakin designed structure is a row of seven identical four story commercial buildings which were designed by the architect Lewis Reynolds in 1854, combining both Greek Revival and Italianate elements on their facades.

These early buildings have relatively small footprints, due to the limiting factors imposed by masonry bearing wall construction methods. As demand increased for larger structures, both their depth and height rose, as in the case of Factor's Row in the 800 block of Perdido Street, designed by Lewis Reynolds in 1858, Photo No. 20. Factor's Row could be considered as the prototypical professional office building group in New Orleans, as they were erected on a speculative basis for the occupancy of brokers and traders in the cotton trade, one of the mainstays of the city's antebellum economy.

There was only minimal residential construction in this area prior to the Civil War, for even in the 1830s the Lower Central Business District had become recognized as the center of the city's commercial activity. Within the district's boundaries there is only one surviving residential building, located at 824 Canal Street, Photo No. 4. Designed by the architect James Gallier, Sr., the house was built in 1844 for Dr. William Newton Mercer. Its survival is due to the fact that in 1884 it was acquired by a private men's club, the Boston Club, and has been used by that organization ever since.

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1860 - 1900 - 12%

In spite of the rather low percentage of buildings in the Lower Central Business District built between 1860 and 1900, it would be incorrect to assume that this time period had little impact upon the district's architectural character. The continuing development of the port of New Orleans as well as the city's business sector led to the construction of several major new buildings, including the first true skyscraper in the city. The new commercial buildings of this period differ significantly from their antebellum counterparts with respect to their physical size as well as their architectural style.

The Italianate style, which had surfaced in the district just before the Civil War, continued in popularity after 1865, with an increase in exterior ornamentation. The group of commercial buildings at 624-634 Canal Street, Photo No. 7, illustrate this more florid stage in the use of the Italianate style. The Produce Exchange, Photo No. 12, designed by the architect James Freret in 1883, uses details which could be considered as Italianate in spirit, yet its overall appearance owes some debt to the architecture of the French Second Empire.

The appearance in the 1880s of more progressive styles in commercial buildings can be attributed to the arrival of the architect Thomas Sully. Sully, both by himself and in association with Albert Toledano, was responsible for many of the city's best commercial buildings. Within the Lower Central Business District, his extant works include the flamboyant New Orleans National Bank at 201 Camp Street, Photo No. 16, built in 1884, and the ten story Hennen Building, built in 1894-95 at 203 Carondelet Street, Photo No. 24. The latter structure, individually listed on the National Register, set the pattern for all future large scale office construction in the city, using a steel frame to support its weight, and occupying a large portion of a city block.

1900 - 1941 - 30%

The first forty years of the twentieth century saw significant new construction in the Lower Central Business District, both on a large and a small scale. The standard for the large office building that had been established at the end of the nineteenth century was taken to its more massive form in this period with the construction of four major high-rise towers for the city's most prominent banks, as well as other smaller scale office blocks. The Hennen Building was surpassed as the city's tallest structure in 1904 with the construction of the Hibernia Bank Building at 226 Carondelet Street, in the foreground of Photo No. 22. Designed by the nationally prominent architectural firm of D. H. Burnham & Company of Chicago, it rose to the height of thirteen floors. Its exterior is simply detailed, with the windows paired side by side to add vertical emphasis.

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The 1920s were the boom years in terms of major high-rise construction in New Orleans, with virtually all of it taking place within the boundaries of the Lower Central Business District. In 1920, the Whitney National Bank built a twenty story addition to their 1909 structure, at 628 Common Street. In 1920-21, the Hibernia National Bank erected their new twenty-three story office tower at 301 Carondelet Street, designed by the New Orleans architectural firm of Favrot & Livaudais. In 1926-27, the building at 210 Baronne Street, built for the Canal Bank and Trust Company and now the home of the First National Bank of Commerce, rose to a height of nineteen floors, and was designed by Emile Weil. This building, shown in Photo No. 26, followed the lead of the Hibernia in using classical forms on its exterior. The American Bank Building, located at 200 Carondelet, in the rear of Photo No. 22, was constructed in 1928-29 from designs by Moise Goldstein. Twenty-six stories tall, it broke new ground in that it departed from the classicism of all of the other bank towers, the bank electing to have their new building in the Moderne style instead.

Two other major 1920s office blocks, the Pere Marquette Building at 150 Baronne Street, Photo No. 27, and the Masonic Temple at 333 St. Charles Avenue, Photo No. 18, built in 1925 and 1926, respectively, used vaguely Gothic elements on their exteriors.

The 1900-1941 period also saw the construction of some smaller scale buildings, most of which stand along Canal Street. Most of the buildings in the 700 block of Canal Street, illustrated in Photo No. 5, were constructed between 1905 and 1910 to house various retail establishments. The very fine classical headquarters of the Benevolent and Protective Order of the Elks at 127 Elks Place, Photo No. 1, was designed by the firm of Toledano, Wogan and Bernard and erected in 1917. Unusual in that it dates from the late 1930s and the depths of the Great Depression is the fine Moderne style drugstore building at 900 Canal Street, Photo No. 3, which was designed by the firm of Weiss, Dreyfous and Seiferth and built in 1938.

**Intrusions - 11%**

An intrusion (or non-contributing element) is defined as a resource less than fifty years old or an historic resource that has lost its integrity. An 11% intrusion rate is remarkably low for a major urban CBD. (Most Register districts in Louisiana have a 20-30% intrusion rate.) With but one exception the modern skyscrapers in the district are on the edge along Canal Street. They exist side by side with significant historic buildings, and to have cut them out would have created boundaries that look gerrymandered. Most of the intrusions are much more modest and in scale with their historic neighbors.

Note: Many of the modern skyscrapers visible in the photos are outside the district boundaries.

## 8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1830-1941  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1830-1941  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

various (see text)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Lower Central Business District is of statewide significance in the area of architecture because it and the recently listed Upper Central Business District are Louisiana's finest collections of historic commercial buildings. The Lower CBD achieves this distinction due to several factors, including an early building stock, the quality of its commercial Italianate architecture, its unparalleled collection of skyscrapers, and the large number of landmarks (often architect designed) from various periods. The period of significance ranges from 1830 to 1941 (the fifty year cutoff). The Lower CBD, like other New Orleans districts, should be regarded as a toute ensemble of many styles and periods as well as building types. While it is true that certain elements, as explained below, make the greatest contribution to its architectural character and quality, every fifty year old building that retains integrity should be considered contributing.

Given the incredible developmental pressure in downtown New Orleans, it is quite remarkable that almost half of the buildings in the district date from before the Civil War. The typical central business district in the state, whether it be in a large city or a small town, is almost completely twentieth century. The small percentage of earlier buildings that exist are, generally speaking, late nineteenth century watered down Italianate commercial buildings. In terms of antebellum commercial architecture, only three significant collections exist, and all are located in New Orleans. In addition to the buildings found in the Lower Central Business District, important collections can be found in the Vieux Carre National Historic Landmark district and in the Upper Central Business District listed on the Register last year. It should also be noted that a significant number of the antebellum commercial buildings in the district are in the Greek Revival style. While Louisiana is justly famous for its Greek Revival domestic architecture, it is rare to find even a single surviving commercial example, let alone an entire collection. In fact, the only places in the state with concentrations of Greek Revival commercial buildings are the Upper CBD, the Lower CBD, and the Vieux Carre.

☒ See continuation sheet

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Sanborn Insurance Maps, New Orleans, 1876, 1885, 1895, 1909, 1940.

New Orleans Architecture: Volume 2, The American Sector. Gretna, Louisiana: Pelican Publishing Company, 1972.

Recommendations for National Register Districts in Community Development Areas.  
Prepared for the Historic District Landmarks Commission, City of New Orleans, by Koch & Wilson/Urban, Consultants, New Orleans, 1979.

Historic District and Landmark files, CBD Historic District Landmarks Commission, 830 Julia Street, New Orleans, LA.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)  
has been requested

☐ previously listed in the National Register

☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register

☐ designated a National Historic Landmark

☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings

Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering

Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

☐ State historic preservation office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☒ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Specify repository:

Historic District Landmarks Commission

830 Julia Street

New Orleans, LA 70113

XX boundaries encompass certified historic

**10. Geographical Data** district (Picayune Place)

Acreage of property @ 72 acres

UTM References

A 11 5 7 8 2 3 6 0 3 3 1 7 5 4 0  
Zone Easting Northing

C 11 5 7 8 3 1 0 0 3 3 1 6 5 2 0

B 11 5 7 8 3 2 2 0 3 3 1 6 8 4 0  
Zone Easting Northing

D 11 5 7 8 2 2 0 0 3 3 1 6 7 2 0

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Please refer to district map.

☐ See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification** Boundaries were drawn to encompass the concentration of significant historic buildings as defined in section 8. In most instances the exact boundary lines were determined by the surrounding intrusive new development. On the north, between N. Peters and N. Rampart, the district abuts the Vieux Carre (NHL). To the south (beyond redeveloped Poydras) is the Upper CBD, listed on the Register last year.

☐ See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

(Part 8 by LA State Historic Preservation

name/title John C. Ferguson, Senior Architectural Historian Office)

organization Historic District Landmarks Commission date June 1990

street & number 830 Julia Street telephone 504 - 523-7501

city or town New Orleans state Louisiana zip code 70113

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The Lower CBD and the adjacent Vieux Carre contain Louisiana's finest Italianate commercial buildings. Very little "full-blown" commercial Italianate architecture exists outside these two districts. The typical Italianate commercial building in Louisiana is a very much watered down (and usually late) manifestation of the style, featuring perhaps segmentally arched windows and a corbelled cornice. By contrast, examples found in the Lower CBD are characterized by free-standing columns, oculus windows, brackets several feet high, round head windows, elaborate tablets, paneled friezes with double modillions, spandrel panels, etc. One even has a full pedimented pavilion. The isolated full-blown examples of the style that exist here and there in other towns in the state pale in comparison to the district's flamboyant Italianate landmarks.

The district is also significant for its unrivaled collection of skyscrapers. The skyscraper is of paramount importance, being one of very few building types one can point to as an American invention. While about half a dozen towns in Louisiana have one, two or three historic skyscrapers, the Lower CBD is the only place where one could say there was a concentration, yielding the standard urban America skyline. The district contains numerous examples, ranging from the Chicago School to the Modernistic style. The district's skyscrapers also are the state's largest, both in terms of height and footprint. Two even have striking rooftop pavilions visible from across the city, a feature found nowhere else in the state.

Finally, the district derives significance from the high percentage of landmark buildings from various periods, many of which are architect designed. Many of these stellar properties are either already on the Register individually or would be eligible for such a designation. Numerous others, while district material in New Orleans, would be clearly individually eligible if they were located anywhere else in the state.



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Upper Central Business District, New Orleans, Orleans Parish, LA

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**Boundary Justification:**

Boundaries were drawn to encompass the concentration of significant historic resources as defined in Section 8. Loss of concentrations due to intrusive new development and demolition determined the exact boundary lines for the district. The remainder of the CBD is visually separated from the nominated district by the almost completely redeveloped four lane Poydras Avenue. (This section of the CBD will be nominated separately later this year.)

The Upper CBD boundaries encompass and exceed the boundaries of two historic districts certified by NPS in 1979 and 1980 (Lafayette Square and the Warehouse District). The boundaries of these two districts would not "stand up in court" so-to-speak by today's standards. This is chiefly true of the Warehouse District, where there are instances of buildings beyond the boundaries being of equal or greater significance than those within.

The only instance where the Upper CBD boundaries subtract from the certified historic district boundaries is at the northeastern edge of the Warehouse District (see blocks 4 and 5 on accompanying map, bounded by Convention Center Boulevard, Poydras, Fulton and Girod). At the time of certification there were historic buildings on these two blocks; however, they have since been redeveloped as parking lots. Because this redevelopment occurred after the district was certified, the two blocks are now being omitted.

LOWER CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT  
NEW ORLEANS, ORLEANS PARISH, LOUISIANA



1830-1860



1860-1900



1900-1941



NON-CONTRIBUTING



PHOTOGRAPH LOCATIONS

N  
1" = 200'



FOR THE DISTRICT

